

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](https://www.sciencedirect.com)

## International Journal of Educational Research

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/ijedures](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/ijedures)

# School marketing and segmentation: A comparative study in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic

Magdalena Kohout-Diaz

LACES EA 74 37, Bordeaux University, France



## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Special educational needs  
Comparative education  
School marketing  
Segmentation  
Inequality

## ABSTRACT

Quantitative data stemming from questionnaires sent to the pupils (Czech Republic, 1638; Bulgaria, 375) and interviews with teachers and management teams of schools in the Czech Republic (63) and Bulgaria (91), describe the processes and marketing strategies of education in a post-communist and liberal transition context.

The survey show that the transformation of education into educational market can be seen at several levels in both countries: the distorted evaluations of the student's special educational needs, the big disrepute of pedagogical practices, the liberal management of the schools (empowerment, sponsoring, competition) and finally at the level of the national education policies, without consideration for the specific social and historical context and without adequate evaluation of the concrete problems (segmentation, inequality).

## 1. Introduction

The paper describes the processes and marketing strategies of education in a post-communist and liberal transition context in the Czech Republic and Bulgaria. Its objective is also to describe the main consequences of the growth of school marketing, which is exponential but not regulated in these two post transition countries.

These processes lead, indeed, to an accentuation of segregationist and hyper-bureaucratic educational practices (Maroy, 2010): they are based on the new logic of performance in a hyper competitive educational context (Ball, 2003, 2004) and have a strong impact on renewed school segmentation and inequalities. So, our work contributes to research on this typical phenomenon, linked to a neoliberal and globalized rhetoric of education (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2012; Torres, 2009).

Its specificity is the analysis of the post-communist context which is significant because of the heavy and sustainable impact of the totalitarian and bureaucratic past on education but also because of the reluctance of the social actors to analyze their history (Mayer, 2004). The development of the school market in this context is problematic because by blocking educational innovation and the regulating action of the social actors (Ball & Maroy, 2009; Oplatka, Hemsley-Brown, & Foskett, 2002), it prevents the analysis of the links between the global constraints and the local needs inherited from the past. This is seen in both post totalitarian countries compared, renowned for their efforts to get involved in the European educational globalization, for their discrimination against pupils of diverse backgrounds and for their rather unequal school systems in the pre-communist period.

Any concrete educational situation is tightly linked to the specific context in which it occurs. Specific contexts at national, regional and local levels (social background, history, politics, culture and economics) are to be included when we try to 'export' educational or training models and concepts to other countries. This is the price of real success and efficiency to improve educational performance at each national level but also at the European level. Hence it is necessary, prior to presenting the research itself, to inform readers about the context in which these survey data were obtained.

E-mail address: [magdalena.kohout-diaz@u-bordeaux.fr](mailto:magdalena.kohout-diaz@u-bordeaux.fr).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2018.05.004>

Received 3 March 2017; Received in revised form 13 November 2017; Accepted 21 May 2018

0883-0355/ © 2018 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

A brief presentation of the Czech and Bulgarian educational systems will allow a better understanding of the specific role of *gymnasia*, their function and the students they cater for. We shall then specify the main scientific characteristics of the school climate surveys carried out in both countries. The presentation and discussion of the findings are then organized around three key ideas.

Therefore, we would like to show that the development of school markets increases significantly the school segmentation. The second idea is about school marketing and how it leads to a falsified evaluation of the real skills and of the needs of pupils. The third idea shows how school marketing profoundly modifies the status and the educational practices of teachers. The latter questions are about the management of establishments in their involvement in educational projects towards a pursuit of profit.

## 2. Research in a post-transitional context of education: from totalitarianism towards liberal democracy

Why is a comparison between the Czech and Bulgarian educational situation relevant? How does the global education market fit into the post-communist transition process? These mechanisms have their own context-dependent characteristics, but they are observable in both countries (Le Gloanec & Rupnik, 2008).

The pre-communist socio-economic profile of the two countries is different: on the one hand, a stable Czech democratic republic with a flourishing industry and, on the other, an authoritarian and unstable Bulgarian tsarist regime with an essentially agrarian economy. The end of the communist period also presents differences: on the one hand the Czech ‘Velvet Revolution’ marked a collapse of the regime under the pressure of ancient and determined dissent (Charter 77), while on the other hand there was the Bulgarian ‘Palace Revolution’ representing internal and controlled deconstruction of the Party. The Czech Republic joined the European Union in 2004, Bulgaria only in 2007.

These two countries have, however, similar histories regarding the establishment of communism, their relative distance from Soviet power during the totalitarian period, and a seemingly fluid and rapid transition (Offe, 1992). They both experienced rapid democratic reconstruction, an explosion of the market economy and a high rate of corruption<sup>1</sup> up to the highest level of the state (this corruption has continued). The installation of the liberal model has been complex, giving many former Party executives the opportunity to appropriate the means of production, networks or abandoned businesses. These and other factors make the comparison relevant.

After defining what we mean by ‘school marketing’ from its definitions (Oplatka & Hemsley-Brown, 2012), we wish to show that the commodification of the school is one of the perverse effects of the gradual democratization of schools, which is the objective in the context of liberal globalization. Paradoxically, this democratization transforms the centring on the needs of the child into an opportunity to revive with the pre-communist school segmentation effected by the *gymnasium* (Spilková, 2005). The significant and discriminatory inequalities apparent in school (Jabbar, 2016) most notably for students with special educational needs; and particularly Roma pupils.

School marketing, defined as a set of different strategies developed by schools to respond to the global institutionalization of competition in education – taken in a double movement of globalization and privatization of education – penetrated the educational systems, including the post totalitarian countries of the Central and Balkan Europe. It affects the schools which take in deprived populations and schools for pupils with specific needs (these schools are often state-governed schools and they try to create a more attractive image to attract parents and pupils to the school and to retain those who might leave) as much as the schools – often deprived – which want to appear as excellent (by publicity and promotion which emphasize assets and advantages of these ‘elite’ schools). The teachers are highly involved in these processes because they risk losing their employment in case of disagreement in a very precarious economic environment for this profession.

Although Education is a field less studied in the process of transition in the countries from the former Soviet Union (Central and Eastern Europe), it is rather obvious that the changes that occurred in the education system after 1989 occurred smoothly, in a progressive and relatively moderate way. One of the first objectives of the changes was a quick and radical detachment from the totalitarian communist education system (1989–1993/95). This earliest moment in the educational transformation lasted only a few months just after the political changeover in 1989, and within our common theoretical framework it is called ‘deconstruction’ (Greger & Walterová, 2007). Then, the Czech and Bulgarian education systems developed with punctual thematic projects with no global rethinking of the aims and of the system of values of the country’s Education. The reforms were considered as finished.

The reforms have mainly addressed, in fact, not only the removal of references to Marxism from the *curricula*, granting establishments their independence and the development of a more participative governance but also the restoration of an early and very determined school segmentation. That is why the educational transition of the totalitarian system towards a democratic and liberal system often remains very difficult: “*the liberal wing, particularly influential, emphasizes a maximal liberalization, a privatization and a demonopolisation of the education, by advocating as main instruments of transformation process of the education is the competition of schools and the reform of the financing*”. In this context, a “*big terminological confusion reigns in the educational literature (...). Certain terms are used practically as synonyms, vaguely defined and, often, interpreted in a very different way by the diverse authors. The correlations, the superimposing of meanings and the distinctive lines of the used notions are not cleared up. The “alternative” and “innovative” definition of the terms causes the biggest problems.*” (Spilková, 2005, 26–29).

It is exactly in terms of ‘alternation’ and ‘innovation’ that the reforms generated by the liberal transformation are presented. But in fact, from the social perspective, the transition led to a great economic crisis and to significant impoverishment of the population. The

<sup>1</sup> According to the agency Transparency International, corruption of the public sector in the Czech Republic ranked 37th in 2015 (score 56) on 168 countries (the 168th being the most corrupted) while Bulgaria is classified 69th (score 41).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6841474>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6841474>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)